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No. 353.

JAMIE'S LETTER.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD,
Author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Sing, robin, up there in the cherry,
A-swing by your wonderful nest,
Where your brown little wife is holding
Her speckled brood to her breast.
You are happy, I know, but oh, robin,
You would carol a gladder tune.
If you only could read the letter
My Jamie has written me!

Blow in your radiant beauty,
Oh, sing, sing, sing!
Your heart is afloat with fragrance
From a thousand summers won!
My heart is like some shy blossom
That waited its June to blow,
With the sunshine of love to woo it,
It will bloom like a rose, I know!

Oh, wind, let me tell you a secret!
And listen, oh, sweet, red rose!
Look out! Mr. Robin hears it,
And his mate the other knows.
The letter my Jamie sent me,
Was full of his love for me,
And my happy heart runs over,
With its jubilant ecstasy.

Sing, robin, your morniest music!
And lift to the kiss o' the sun
Your sweet, red lips, oh roses!
My summer is just begun!
For Jamie wrote that he loved me;
Do you hear? He loves only me!
And to-morrow he's coming! My lover,
My prince, and the king to be!

SURE SHOT SETH, The Boy Rifleman;

OR,
THE YOUNG PATRIOTS OF THE NORTH.

BY OLL COOMES,
*AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "RED ROB," "DACA-
KOTA DAN," "OLD DAN RACKBACK," ETC.*

CHAPTER I.

THE SPY IN THE LOG.

An August night of the year 1862 hung over the forests of Minnesota. The sky was overcast with a leaden-gray mist, and the pale moon looked feebly to earth.

The river rolled on through the purple shadows, whispering low and sullenly to the stately pines, its faithful sentinels of centuries gone.

The dreary, monotonous drone of insect wings seemed everywhere, and now and then the hoot of an owl boomed heavily through the night.

The breathings of reposing Nature came in pulsing sobs, as though under her fair and mighty bosom an aching, throbbing heart lay, conscious of the black cloud gathering on the horizon.

Through the woods bordering on the Minnesota river, and contiguous to the Yellowstone Agency, a figure was gliding noiselessly along—a human figure—that of a boy with bright blue eyes and strong, prepossessing features. He was light in form and lithe of limb, and darted onward through the gloom as though it were his own element. He seemed perfectly familiar with his course, and dodged in and out of the tangled mazes of the grim old wood, and along the sinuous windings of the valleys, like a hound upon the trail.

At length he drew up in the forest under some stately pines, where the darkness seemed to have been born of infinity. Dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground, Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman and Spy, listened.

"To-whit-to-whoo-hoo-o-o-o!" rung from the tree overhead.

Seth shook his head thoughtfully.

"I never like to hear an owl hoot," he said to himself, "for it's a bad sign."

He sat down on a hollow log, and after the owl's cry came a deep and profound silence—a silence that became painful and foreboding to the youth. But it lasted only a few minutes when that drowsing hum of nature was resumed.

Sure Shot Seth breathed easier. He whistled softly to himself.

A frog croaked on the margin of the river.

A cricket chirped shrilly in the hollow log.

The wind whispered softly among the stately pines.

A night-hawk screamed above the forest, then with that peculiar hollow boom of his wings, shot up into the sky.

Again the old owl overhead sent forth his hoarse notes quavering upon the air; and the sound was immediately followed by a scrambling among the branches, as upon heavy wing the bird went lumbering away through the night.

Then a silence profound as the grave followed.

"Ah," mused Seth, "that frightened cry and flight of the owl, and this terrible silence have a meaning."

He started to his feet as he spoke. He had been trained in the lore of the woods and night, and could read the sounds of each like an open book, and interpret their meaning and portents. There was a difference in the sound of a stealthy movement and one that was not, though both may have been equally loud. But it took an instinct trained in the school of practical experience to discriminate between them. This our fearless young hero possessed. The silence that succeeded the warning cry of that cowardly old sentinel of the night, the owl, convinced him that danger was approaching. He bent his head and listened intently.

Off in the direction of the river he heard the heavy tread of feet.

"They're comin', sure as death!" the youth said to himself, then he dropped to the ground and crept into the hollow log upon which he had been seated.

The footsteps approached and paused under the great pines within a few feet of the log. The boy knew they were the steps of booted feet, and had some idea to whom they belonged. He applied his eye to a knot-hole in his retreat, and peered out, but all was wrapped in Egyptian gloom. He pressed his ear to the orifice and listened. To and fro beneath the branching trees he heard the unknown deep piping with restless impatience.

Presently he heard voices in conversation, and then a faint beam of light streamed into the log.

He applied his eyes to the hole again, and in

SURE SHOT SETH



Dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground, Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman and Spy, listened.

the light of a pocket-lantern, saw four persons standing, and looking like Titan figures in the gloom.

Three of them Seth recognized as the notorious Sioux chiefs, Little Crow, Inkpaduta, and Little Priest. The fourth was a white man, whose long hair, broad-brimmed hat, peculiar garb, and general appearance were characteristic of no other class of men than the wealthy planters of the Southern States.

"So you have kept your appointment," said

the white man, raising the lantern and scanning each face before him with knitted brows.

"Little Crow is a great chief," said the redoubtable chief himself, "and never breaks his word with his friends."

The other two answered in the same words.

"I am glad to hear this, chiefs, for it gives me greater strength," replied the white man.

"I have come from the sunny land of the South to confer with my red brothers; are they ready to

listen?—are there no enemies' ears near us?"

"The trees have ears, and the wind sometimes tells secrets," answered Little Crow.

"Then you do not deem this a safe place to consult?"

"No; the night-jar screamed with affright, and shot into the sky when he passed near here. He is the spirit that warns the red-man when darkness hides dangers from his eyes. There are safer places than this to talk," replied the chief.

"Let my red brother select the safest place,

that the ears of our enemies may not hear what we say," said the white man.

"A brave waits by the river-side to take us in his canoe whither we desire to go. Let us seek the solitude and well-guarded shores of the island in the river below. There can we talk in safety, for no enemy's ear can cross the water."

"It is well, great chief," answered the white

plotter.

Disappointment clouded the face of the youth in the log as he heard the four emissaries of evil moving away. But his quick brain soon suggested a new course of action, and, creeping from the log, he rose to his feet and glided away through the darkness, going in the direction of the river, but keeping wide of the four enemies.

He reached the bank much in advance of them. Then he stole softly down the river until he came in sight of the Indian and canoe spoken of by Little Crow.

The warrior sat in the boat with his blanket drawn over his head. A rifle lay on the thwart at his side.

The prow of the canoe lay partly upon the beach.

The pale moon-beams, struggling downward through the darkness and mist, revealed all to the eyes of the young spy, as he crouched in the shadows near.

The keen ear of the savage boatman was on the alert. It detected a slight sound in the shrubbery. He started from his seat and fixed his eyes on the bushes before him. Then followed a "whirr"—a dull, sudden blow; a groan; the rush of feet; a splash in the water; the dip of a paddle, and the prow of a boat cleaving the waters.

The moon hid her face behind a cloud as if with shame; while the river flowed on as merrily as though its waters had not been stained with human blood.

CHAPTER II.

THE LONE ISLAND CONFERENCE.

SLOWLY toward the river Little Crow and his three companions made their way.

The moccasined feet of the savages trod as lightly as a panther's; but the tramp of the white man gave ample notice of his approach. The red-skins glided under and around the brush that disputed their way, but, like an ox, their companion crashed his way through, much to their annoyance.

Finally they reached the river-bank a few rods above the canoe.

The moon uncovered her face and looked to earth once more.

The dip of a paddle arrested the Indians' ears. Out upon the river Little Crow saw his boatman seated in the canoe, toying with the paddle. His head and shoulders were covered with his red and blue plaid.

No chief called to him. He headed the canoe ashore. As the prow touched upon the beach Little Crow courteously bade his white friend enter.

The white man stepped into the craft, advanced and seated himself.

The boat was a long, slender affair, made of a log. The paddler occupied the stern; the white man a seat next; Little Crow third, and Inkpaduta the prow.

"Let Serleque head for the island below," said Little Crow, in a low tone.

Without a word the paddle dipped, the boat backed out from the shore, swung its long prow around, and then under the skillful management of Serleque, glided away down the stream.

Silence sealed the lips of the party. The white man gazed around him with a wild look of admiration upon his face. The moonbeams struggling through the white mist rendered objects weird and somber. The dark woods on either side rose up like the black walls of a mountain pass. Now and then a night-jar screamed overhead. The rolling waters surged and gurgled under and around them.

Bright flashed the dipping paddle in the moonbeams—light was its fall in the placid water.

Swiftly onward through the waves glided the craft. In a few minutes more the island was reached. Inkpaduta, followed by Little Priest, Little Crow and the white man, landed. The boatman swung his boat alongside the little sand-bar, laid down his paddle and drew his blanket closer around his head.

The island was not over a rod in width by two in length. It was a barren sand-bar, yet well guarded by the waves on either side.

Little Crow spread his blanket upon the ground and invited the white man to be seated upon it. Then the chief sat down opposite him, while the other two chiefs sat down one upon the right and one upon the left.

"Let our white brother speak, for we are now safe," said Little Crow.

The white man at once opened the conference; he represented himself as an agent of the Southern Confederacy, then waging war against the Union. He claimed that he had been sent North to effect terms of compromise with the Sioux under Little Crow, and enlist their aid in battling their enemies, particularly those who tried to subdue them in case victory crowned their arms. The chiefs listened closely to the propositions of the Southern agent, and after the latter had concluded, Little Crow arose and delivered a warm and eloquent speech. He set forth the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the government, and expressed a belief that their grievances would justify them in taking up arms. He did not come to a final decision, however, until Inkpaduta and Little Priest had expressed themselves on the subject. When they had, and he found they favored the agent's views, the great Sioux chief at once entered into an article of agreement with the agent to assist them in their battle against the Union. Even the very day and hour upon which the Indian massacre so prominent on the pages of history, was to begin, were agreed upon by the chiefs and the agent before the conference ended. Altogether, an hour was consumed by these four arch-plotters, and finally they rose to depart.

As they turned toward the boat, a cry of surprise burst from their lips. The boat had left the island and was half-way across to the shore.

Little Crow called to his boatman, but the latter made no reply. He pushed on and soon entered the border of shadows along the shore.

Then he permitted the mantle that enveloped his head and shoulders to fall to his feet, while a low, silent peal of laughter escaped his lips.

The boatman was Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Spy, not the Indian, as Little Crow believed.

From his covert in the woods had Seth hurled

a stone and stricken the Indian boatman down. The boy, tress the body overboard, enveloped himself in the savage's blanket, turned the boat away from the scene of the tragedy and paddled along the shore up-stream until hailed by the chief coming down. And in this manner, the young spy possessed himself of the secret plot so soon to deluge the land in blood.

CHAPTER III.

SURE SHOT SETH turned and glanced back toward the island. He could see the four forms upon it, and hear the chief calling to Serique, his boatman. Taking up his rifle from its concealment under the seat, he examined its priming, and was about to try a shot at one of the plotters when a sound in the water arrested his attention.

The gazed downward and to his horror beheld a man's face peering up at him from the side of the boat. It was an Indian's face—the face of Serique, the boatman! He had recovered from the blow he had received at the hands of the young spy, and was there to seek revenge. He stood in the water to his waist, and the instant his eyes met those of his foe, he threw up his hands and seized hold of the boat.

Seth saw, at a glance, that the savage had an advantage to begin with; and the first thing the youth did was to place his finger to his lips and utter a shrill, piercing whistle that fairly started the savage as its intonations quivered through the air.

Instantly, almost, it was answered in a similar manner from back of the hills, and then the savage knew that the young pale-face had friends near. But, not to be thwarted in his plans of vengeance, he rocked the canoe violently and pitched Seth out into the water. Then the two grappled in a deadly struggle—the red-skin and the white—the man and the boy. The former uttered a yell of savage fury, the latter a shout of defiance.

Although he was weak from recent loss of blood, the savage had no idea but that he could easily vanquish his youthful enemy; but the moment they grappled he found he had reckoned without his host, for the boy not only was possessed of wonderful strength, but the agility of a panther.

The red-skin had no weapons save those that nature gave him, Seth having deprived him of his knife and hatchet at the time of throwing him overboard. And his young adversary was no better provided, owing to the suddenness in which the conflict had been brought about; consequently the fight was confined to skill, strength and endurance. Seth made one or two attempts to draw his knife, and finally succeeded, but before he could use it, he was forced into such a position that he was compelled to drop it. This left him no recourse save to use his bare hands.

Up and down for the youth the course of action gravitated toward the center of the river, which fact gave the enemy another advantage in consequence of his height and the depth of the water. But brave, desperate and determined the lad struggled manfully, heroically, to receive the savage all he wanted to do. Their flying arms and feet beat and churned the water to a foam around them, as in rapid evolutions they whirled and spun to and fro in every direction.

At times they would sink from view, the water boiling and surging over them, then pop up perhaps a rod from where they sunk, puffing and blowing with sheer exhaustion. At last, then, they would cease their struggle for a moment to rest, but never relinquishing the hold upon each other.

During one of those lulls in the conflict, half a dozen shadowy figures glided from the woods, and pausing on the shore glanced up and down the stream. Then a voice called:

"Seth? Seth? where are you?"
"Here in a—" The rest of the sentence was lost in the savage's yell and the renewal of the conflict.

"Boys," cried one of the party upon the shore, "Sure Shot is in peril."

"Yes!" responded the others.
"Boys, boys!" exclaimed the first speaker, "that is your element—"

The lad addressed as Beaver uttered the peculiar cry of the fur-bearing animal of that name; then, divesting himself of his outer clothing, plunged into the water and struck out toward the struggling foes.

By this time Seth and the Indian had drifted out into the middle of the river, where the current was swift and strong. The element was an enemy that was no respecter of persons, and not only proved a great annoyance to the combatants, but threatened the lives of both, for they were under water a good portion of the time.

Beaver swam rapidly, with much ease apparently, through the water was his home. When within a few rods of Seth and his antagonist when they rose to the surface from a long submersion, and to encourage his friend, he shouted:

"Brace up, Sure Shot; brace up, for I'm coming, and I end with the sharp, piercing cry of the animal after which he had been named."

For a few moments they struggled in the swiftest part of the current; then spun rapidly across to the opposite shore, and disappeared among the hanging network of roots, laid bare by the wash of the waves. The Beaver knew they were in blind darkness. However, he was about to follow to the scene of conflict when he saw a dozen savage forms appear on the bank just over the combatants, and he was compelled to change his mind. He remained perfectly still on the waves and watched. They walked to the edge of the bank and looked over, but not seeing the foes, one of them dropped himself down into the river and crept under the bank to his friend's assistance.

The next moment a cry of agony issued from under the bank; then all became still.

The battle was ended, but who had been the victor?

The Beaver, slowly drifting down the river unseen by the savages, held his breath in suspense.

The next moment a figure crept out from under the bank, and climbing up into the moonlight, brandished aloft a human scalp, at the same time uttering a fierce, triumphant war-whoop.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRONG SCALP AND THE BOY BRIGADE. The Beaver drifted slowly down the river beyond danger, then sought the shore and his companions.

"Boys," he said, sad and heavy-hearted, "our gallant young leader is gone. The accursed savages were too much for him. Poor Seth! his scalp is the first of the long-threatened troubles."

A groan of the deepest anguish was wrung from the lips of each of the little band of youths—followers of Sure Shot Seth. Dearly they loved their young leader, and his death fell heavily upon their young hearts. But, all that was now left for them to do was to search out the body, give it a respectful burial, and go with sad and heavy hearts with the duties of life from about the camp.

"Sons, boys!" exclaimed one of the party, and the next moment all disappeared like a shadow before a burst of sunshine.

It was a blood-curdling war-whoop!

Away through the forest like hounds glided the shadowy forms of the savages, their treacherous hearts thirsting for human blood.

Here and there, every boy taking care of himself, glided the followers of Sure Shot Seth. With the silence of panthers they crept among the bushes, dodged around the trees and rocks,

and stole onward through the woods and darkness.

Suddenly the sharp bark of a fox broke upon the night. One of the fleeing youths started as though a bullet had whistled past his ears. He stopped, bent his head and listened. Again the barking of the fox broke upon his ears. A smile of happy surprise burst over his face, and clear and distinct he sent forth an exact imitation of the sound he had heard. Then he glided away in the direction whence the barking had emanated. He moved briskly, yet with silence, silence, and followed the one course in a "bee-line." He had gone nearly a hundred yards when a low voice hailed him.

"Hullo; is it you, Reynard?"

"Great heavens!" was the excited answer; "do my ears deceive me? or do I hear the voice of Sure Shot Seth?"

"I am here, Reynard," was the response, and Sure Shot Seth stepped from a cluster of bushes and confronted his friend.

"Well, by the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Reynard, "there's a big mistake somewhere. Why, Seth, we mourned you as dead. That savage flourished a scalps aloft when he came from under the bank and uttered a triumphant scalping."

"I know he did the deluded fool; but the fact is, he took the scalps of a friend. He succeeded in getting his knife out just as I discovered that a second red-skin had appeared on the scene, and by a sudden movement I brought my enemy into such a position as to receive the knife of his friend in his heart. The savage knew not but that it was me, and fearing off his scalp, rushed out and climbed up the bank in great glee with a comrade's scalp, leaving me to make my way out at leisure. But are the other boys about, Reynard?"

"Good for the wild Irishman," exclaimed his companions, when, with a sudden movement, he turned a summersault and came up on a seat at the opposite side of the room.

"Och, and a broth av a b'y was me aged down through the whole circumference of O'Ropes a mäch, b'y somethin' to rouse the blood that fit at Bunker's Hill—somethin' military that's a marthal moosic, that's the jigger."

Tim Tricks and Seth were both fine musicians, and, in accordance with the Whippowil's request, struck up the "Grand Russian March," to the delight of their auditors.

The music swelled out in enchanting melody, and, with its varying notes, the blood of the youths glided through their veins in symphony with the soul-stirring strains.

The scene was one seldom met with under similar circumstances. In the flickering, changing light dancing over the walls, the deer birds and animals the common enemies of the trappers, these trapper boys seemed aquiver with life and ready to start from their perch, enchanted by the music.

The youthful faces of the lads glowed with the emotions stirred within their breasts, and their senses seemed floating away on the ravishing sounds called forth by the skillful hands of the performers. But in the midst of all, while every mind was diverted from the cares of the outside world, and absorbed in the sweet melody of music, a dark body suddenly dropped from above in the middle of the floor with a dull, heavy thud, and something bright upon it glinted in the light.

The music ceased, and the boys started to their feet with an involuntary exclamation of horror.

In the room before them stood a powerful savage, his head shaven, his face in war paint, and wreathed in a sinister smile of diabolical triumph.

There was no lost in the room, and, glancing upward, the boys saw an opening had been made in the roof during the musical entertainment, and, before they had time to act, a second savage swung himself down into the room and confronted the young hunters. He was immediately followed by a third, a fourth, and so on, until seven powerful warriors stood in the middle of the house, facing the Boy Brigade, with their hands upon their weapons, a devilish smile of triumph upon their faces, and a murderous intent in their hearts.

"I don't mind it—I can laugh at it now, Madame Clarina. As long as you were near, and I could see your face, I felt not the lash. They might have killed me, but I would never have uttered a word."

"I wish I could have spared you the torture, Florio—but there was no other way. Sometime I will repay you—until then, you have my heart's sincerest thanks. I shall not forget your fidelity, and—ah! cruel that I am!" she exclaimed, as an involuntary shudder agitated the Mexican's frame as a gust of wind caused the jacket's sleeve with its heavy golden button to strike against his raw back. "I am talking here, while you are suffering, your wounds unhealed for—"

"If you would please call old Dinah—"

"The great black cow—with her clumsy hands—no! 'In my cause you suffered; the less I can do—wait one moment, my friend,' and she swiftly glided away toward the stone building, soon after returning, bearing soft lined clothes and a jar of ointment.

"Not you, madam?" faltered Florio, as she gently removed the garments from his lacerated back.

"Yes, I, my friend and brother," Clarina replied, paying no heed to the crowd of swarthy, dirty miners who drew near under lead of Leon. "My lips bade you suffer; my hands shall do what they can to make amends."

Doubtless the reader has suspected the truth. Believing that the vigilantes were in reality searching for Big George and his brothers, and knowing that if so, they would not be easily gotten out of the gulch, Clarina determined upon a bold ruse, knowing that she could depend upon Florio to the last drop of his heart's blood.

The ruse was cunningly conceived and admirably carried out. She stole away, knowing that her absence would be discovered and she speedily followed. In the first few moments she gave Florio his true instructions, and had completed them when she saw Bart Nobile stealing toward them. Her after words were spoken to mislead him. Florio chose a point of the wall where he must necessarily be discovered. Then came the hardest part. A premature confession might ruin all. The keen-witted diggers might "smell a mice." Madame Clarina had calculated closely. She stood beside him, not alone to give him courage, but so that he might see her leave the spot, which was the agreed upon signal for him to speak out.

With a skill that betokened no slight experience in surgery, Madame Clarina finished dressing Florio's wounds, then gave him her hand, assisting him to arise, and apparently for the first time noting the presence of Leon and the laborers.

"Why are you standing there—and the entrance unguarded?" she cried, sharply. "Go; see that both trails are barricaded. Work as though your life depended upon every moment; those accursed ladrones may return at any moment. Come, Florio."

"I will go with them, señora—I can work—"

"No. You have finished your work—and right nobly, too. We will work for you, my friend. You need rest and quiet. Come. Do not be afraid to lean upon my arm. It is strong."

As Florio attempted to walk, he found that his boasted strength had abandoned him, and only for the tender support, he would have fallen, so severe had been the punishment he had undergone. But with her aid he managed to reach one of the hubs where a bed had been prepared for his reception by the fat negress, Dinah. Bidding her minister carefully to his wants, Senora Clarina left the hut and hastened down to the mouth of the gulch, where the work of defense was rapidly progressing.

A number of cedar and pine trees were cut down, their butt points inward along the narrow trails, their stout, straggling branches closely trimmed and sharply pointed, forming an abatis that could not easily be passed from the valley side. Over the trunks were piled heavy bowlders, to keep them in place to guard against an enemy's rolling them over into the swiftly-flowing water. Twenty paces further up the defile a stout barricade of bowlders was erected, with convenient loop-holes through which shots could be delivered.

It was while busily directing the erection of this rock defense that Clarina heard a deep, booming voice from close behind her and turned quickly, with a sharp cry.

She beheld three men, worn and haggard, their garments tattered, their faces begrimed and gloomy. Her face flushed scarlet, then turned ghastly pale, and it seemed that only her hold upon the stout bush growing beside her kept her from falling to the ground.

"Skeeered for oncoot, by thunder!" rumbled the voice of Little Pepper, ending in a hoarse laugh. "I reckon she tuck us for ghosts, boys!"

"I did not expect you so soon," she faltered.

"We have been here longer than you think," interrupted Big George, in a harsh voice.

"You have been entertaining company."

"It was you they came to see, not me," spiritedly replied the woman, her color returning.

"They would have been here yet, only for Florio. He threw them off the scent, at the cost of—"

"I saw it all, from the mouth of the tunnel, though I couldn't tell just what it was all about—nor does it matter now. Tell me, where is my brother Jack."

"I do not know—he is not here," she replied, slowly.

"He must be here—he started last night from town to come here. You are trying to deceive me."

With an angry fire in her eyes, Clarina brushed past him and darted along the rocky trail, quickly vanishing among the shrubbery. Pepper-pot followed her with his eyes until she disappeared, then sharply turned upon his brother.

"You've no call to speak to her like that, Big George. She's a lady, every inch o'er her, as none should know better'n you. An' when you come to 'cussin' her of lyin', all I've got to say is that you lie yourself in sayin' so—that, now!"

As he spoke, Pepper-pot assumed an attitude of defense, anticipating a striking retort, but Big George only laughed shortly, then turned away, and closely questioned the Mexican, Leon. Of him he could learn nothing concerning Red Pepper, and cursing his luck that was running so crookedly, Big George flung him back moodily in the shade, his thoughts anything but pleasant ones.

The other brothers assumed control of the defenses, and worked busily until the sun sank to rest, when they expressed themselves satisfied with the result. A handful of resolute men could hold the gulch against an army, unless provided with cannon to sweep away the barricades.

The sound of a horn ended this inspection, and even Big George promptly obeyed the call to supper. Old Dinah waited upon them, and for a time she found her hands full. But then, their hunger appeased, the brothers sat around the table upon which the negress had placed decanters of brandy and whisky, glasses, ci-

gars, etc. Big George filled his glass thrice in rapid succession, but ere he could empty the third, the husky voice of Dinah sounded in his ear.

"Miss, say she must see you, Mass George."

With a snarling curse, the giant drained his glass, then left the hut and strode across to the stone building. He was not kept waiting. Clarina opened the door, admitting him, then closed and secured it, slipping the key into her pocket. If Big George noticed this movement, he made no comment, but flung himself upon a velvet-covered sofa, with an angry scowl,

"Well, I'm here; now, what do you want?"

"You know well enough what I want, George Pepper," replied Clarina, in English, pure and unaccented. "Why have you been so long absent—what have you been doing—and why have you been spending so many days and nights with? This is what I wish to know."

"You speak as though you had a right to know—" "And haven't I? Who has a better right—who can have a better right than the woman to whom you swore eternal and undying love—and I am that woman?"

"Yes, I believe I did do something of the kind, once," lazily rejoined Big George, producing a cigar and moistening its tip with his lips. "I suppose I meant it all, too, at the time—"

He was interrupted by a sharp cry—a cry of mingled rage and pain—as Clarina stamped her feet passionately, half-drawing the poniard from her belt. Instantly Big George was upon his feet, an ominous devil in his eyes.

"None of that, my lady! I'm not in the humor for playing, and if you stir up the devil in me, it'll be the worse for you. Once for all, this nonsense must end. I don't deny having made a fool of myself about you, once. I'd love you then, and meant every word I said. But you, you said your heart was dead to love while he was unavenged. You made me swear to aid you; so I have. I worked for you like a dog—ay! like a devil! But as often as I spoke of love, you checked me. You denied me everything, even a kiss. Well, what could you expect? I began to find that I could live without you—that there were other women as fair and lovable as you. You let the chance slip from you. I grew to love another, even better than I did you—"

"And you dare say this to my very face—dare taunt me with this new love!" gasped the woman, pale with rage.

"If it is the truth, why not?" he coolly replied. "If what I say is painful, you can only blame yourself. Surely my actions of late have spoken plainly enough! But no—you must force a scene upon me—and now you've got it, red hot!"

"Yes, I have got it," said Clarina, with a strange calmness. "And your turn will come next. Do you think I have been sleeping all this time? No, George Pepper, my eyes were open long since. I knew of your love for that girl—the variety actress. I knew that you had spoken to her the very same words you poured out at my feet; and I knew, too, that she scorned your love. I knew how she eluded you; how you hunted for her, finally finding her at Blue Earth. I knew, too, of the plot you formed for abducting her."

"Since you are so wise, perhaps you are aware that my plot succeeded—that brother Jack carried her off for me—that

he succeeded in disposing of the claim at his own figures. Great was his exultation, loud his boasting for a few days; but then the laugh changed sides. The buyers set to steady work, and within the week developed one of the richest "strikes" in the vicinity, clearing from six to eight ounces of gold per day. Cursing his folly, Gin Cocktail tried hard to go back of his bargain, but in vain. He, himself, had caused the papers to be drawn up so as to leave no loophole for the escape of his supposed "sardines," and bitterly enough he regretted it now. But he could do nothing.

Gin Cocktail kept close to his covert, only stealing out once to "confiscate" some bacon and hard tack from the stock of a devotee of the drama, whom he felt confident would be at the Temple. Succeeding in this, and provided with a jug full of water, he bore his enforced confinement as well as could be expected.

From this refuge he overheard the disturbance at the Temple, the running fight maintained by Red Pepper, and the wild excitement that followed. In the gray light of dawn he saw the vigilantes, under leadership of Bart Noble, ride rapidly away in the direction of Diamond Gulch. As the day progressed, he saw that the town was almost completely deserted, and as his wounds and bruises tingled under the noonday glare, a bold plan gradually shaped itself in his mind. The cabin of the Kendalls lay to his left, not a quarter of a mile distant, alone, since the nearest building was hundreds of yards away.

"I'll do it or bust!" he muttered, a wicked devil in his eye. "He ain't been to the 'spress office for months. They've bin makin' big wages—an' it's mine by good rights, any way. He went 'long o' them fellers, 'most likely. She'll be alone—twon't be a hard job. Ef I kin only git my hands on the gold—I'll soon settle her! They won't nobody 'spicion me. They think I pockacheet, hot foot. They'll lay it to some o' those dirty greasers. Yes, I kin do it—an' I will, too!"

Lying upon his stomach—a sitting posture was not favorite with Gin Cocktail, just then—his eyes fixed upon the lone cabin, the bummer carefully formed his diabolical plot. He believed its execution would be easy, and accompanied by little real danger. If Sneaky had gone, as he firmly believed, since he could see that no one was working at the claim—then there was only the girl to deal with. And the devilish light that filled his eyes whenever he caught a glimpse of her light, graceful form—now clad in the garments suitable for her sex—told plainly enough how little mercy she need expect at his hands.

A dread lest the vigilantes should return and thus frustrate his plans, caused Gin Cocktail to leave his covert earlier than he would otherwise have dared. The men had scarce disappeared an hour when he stole cautiously down the hill toward the lone cabin. A burning longing for revenge, together with the hope of making a rich haul of gold, deadened his pains, and the bummer betrayed no stiffness nor deafness as he neared the shanty.

Creeping forward, keeping in the darkest shade, he gained the cabin wall undiscovered. All was silent within. There were no lights burning. Evidently Josie had gone to bed, just what he had calculated upon. He cautiously tried the door, then the one wooden-shuttered window; but each and all were fastened from within.

A grating curse told that he had not counted upon this, still, at the same time, it convinced him that Josie was alone within the cabin. He knew that Sneaky's bunk lay directly beneath the window, which was usually left ajar, to admit the cool, fresh air.

"Jest my durned crooked luck!" snarled the bummer, spitefully. "Wa-al, ef I can't git the dust, I'll hev my revenge, anyhow, ef I die for it!"

The cabin was a frail one, built of pine and cedar poles, the interstices being filled with moss and dried grass, the whole thatched with layers of bark for shingles. Beneath the sultry sun, these materials had become dry as tinder, so inflammable that a spark would be enough to insure its destruction.

None knew this better than Gin Cocktail, since he had occupied the cabin for several weeks. And, guided by this knowledge, he lost no time in carrying out his devilish project. Gathering an armful of dried grass and leaves, mingled with twigs and pine-knots, he built four separate piles, one at each side of the cabin, then striking a match he ignited a wisp of hay, running rapidly from one pile to another until the four were blazing freely. Then, with revolver in hand, he crouched down in a clump of bushes, some twenty yards from the cabin. From this covert he could command the window and one of the doors. At both of the latter he had started fires, and already he could see that the growing flames had fastened upon the pitch-pine slabs.

As stated in a previous chapter, the cabin was situated in a narrow valley, and a bend in the hollow shut off all view of the town. Thus Gin Cocktail had little cause to fear interruption from that direction, at least until the increasing glow should awaken suspicion.

Eagerly he awaited the result, his eyes glowing, his tongue licking his dry, parched lips, his skinny face fairly hideous with a Satanic glee. He could see that the cabin was fairly afire, the pitch-pine poles burning furiously. The most chinking dropped out in blazing flakes. The forked tongues of fire were reaching far into the interior. And then his gaze concentrated upon the window, as he saw that the door was a blazing furnace through which no living thing could pass.

"Ha! ha! now she feels it!" he laughed, as a half-stifled shriek came from within the cabin.

"Now it touches her—now it's spoiling her baby face! Ha! h—l!" he grated, fiercely, "she'll git away, arter all!"

He heard a rattling crash within, and then the wooden shutter was flung open, with a pale, terrified face appeared at the opening. It was that of Josie Kendall.

The assassin saw that she would escape his devilish snare, unless speedily prevented. The opening was ample large enough to permit her crawling out, and at this side of the building the flames were fiercest by the door. Instantly his resolve was taken. He had already dared too much to falter now, and, rising up in his covert, he raised his revolver, crying aloud:

"Go back—I'll blow yer brains out of ya don't go back!"

Josie saw the threatening figure, heard the menacing words, but, instead of obeying, she struggled still further through the window, uttering a shrill, piercing cry for help.

With another curse, the assassin raised his pistol and fired. But the bullet sped wide of its intended victim.

The maiden's cry for aid was not unheeded. A figure was already hastening to her rescue, and was close behind Gin Cocktail when he uttered his fierce threat. Rising into the air, the figure leaped forward, striking heavily against the murderer, hurling him to the ground with stunning force, just as his pistol exploded.

As though under the same impulse the leap was repeated, and then the rescuer darted on to the cabin, just in time to catch the half-senseless maiden in his arms.

"Thank God! darling, I was in time!" he cried, pressing his lips to hers, as he drew his precious burden away from the intense heat. "But am I—you are not injured?" he added, fearfully, as he received no reply.

At this moment a horseman galloped up, and leaping to the ground, confronted him, with drawn pistol.

"You here, Bush! what does all this mean?" cried Little Cassino, for he was who last appeared.

"It means murder—a man was trying to shoot her as I came up—yonder he lies," hastily replied the rescuer.

"I saw the light and hastened up, but you were too quick for me. A dying man, too!

Turned doctor—you were trying to restore her yur breath, wasn't you?" with a hard, unnatural laugh.

"I have known her for months, doctor," quietly replied Bush—the young miner whom we saw lying wounded at the "Mint." "Never mind how I found out, but I knew who 'Soft Tommy' was all along, and she has promised to be my wife."

"I'm glad to hear it, Tipton," was the warm reply. "You're well worthy her love, and I can't say more than that, though I tried a year."

But she's coming to. You'd better wrap this blanket around her. Young girls are sometimes bashful about appearing before their lovers in such scant attire—though she has no cause to be afraid," smiled Little Cassino, taking a blanket from the croup of his horse and passing it to Bush Tipton.

Then he turned to where the baffled assassin lay, not having stirred a member since that second deadly jump. The young miner had alighted fairily upon the neck and head of Gin Cocktail, breaking the shins and crushing in the other with his heavy iron-shod heels.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A VICTIM OF JEALOUSY.

MEANTIME, what fate had befallen Estelle Mack, the wife of the ill-fated gymnast? To explain her, as yet, enigmatical disappearance, the reader must go back to the Temple on the evening when Red Pepper abducted Zoe, instead of the game Big George set him at.

Only for his stumble and fall over the body of Little Cassino at the door of the green-room, the desperado would doubtless have succeeded in his bold attempt. But, as he fell, Estelle slipped from his grasp and fled from him, into the green-room, the only avenue of escape left open. The darkness aided her in so far that Red Pepper seized one of the ballet girls in her stead, nor discovered his mistake until hours later.

But, if favored by fortune in this respect, poor Estelle was to fall victim to a scarcely less diabolical plot. In the darkness she ran against some person, uttering a little cry of terror at the contact. A voice called her by name—a voice that she readily recognized. She replied, with just what words she never knew. But it was sufficient, since her voice plainly declared her identity, and instantly a pair of soft, warm arms wound around her trembling form.

"Come with me—hasten! He is hunting for you—he will murder you if he finds you now! Hasten—for the love of Our Mother! hasten!"

The voice was that of a woman, eager yet guarded, and audible only to the ears of Estelle above the wild uproar and trampling with which the wooden walls resounded. Never dreaming of treachery—why should she?—Estelle followed the woman. Across the room, through a low, triangular opening in one corner, now creeping, groping their way blindly through a maze of rough beams and scantlings, progressing with wonderful ease and certainty considering the obstacles; it was as though the woman-guide possessed the visual powers of a cat. At length she paused, pushing aside a short plank and stepping through into a small, dimly-lighted dressing-room.

"There—you are safe here; no one can touch you now," spoke the woman, as she pulled Estelle after her and slipped the plank into place again.

"Let me go—I must find him—George—they are murdering him!" gasped Estelle, brushing the hair back from her eyes and glancing wildly around her.

At her words an almost terrifying change passed over the other woman's countenance. Naturally beautiful, though of a brilliant, passionate type, a *brune* in whose veins coursed the hot blood of the sun-lands, her face now became dark and frowning, a menacing light in her eyes. As though aware of this fact and lest her intended victim should take the alarm and escape her toils after all, she averted her head, bending over a trunk as she spoke.

"One moment and we will go. But you are ill—fainting! Smell this; it will give you strength—ah—ha!"

She moved swiftly toward Estelle, a crumpled handkerchief in hand. Bewildered, dazed though she was, Estelle detected the cloying odor of chloroform, and started back, but ere she could raise her voice, that the form was upon her, bearing her back, pressing the drugged cloth to her nostrils, holding it firmly in place until the girl-wife's struggles ceased and her body hung limply across the arm of the traitress.

A low, mocking laugh parted the lips of the Mexican as she allowed her victim to sink to the floor, flinging the tell-tale handkerchief back into her trunk and closing the lid.

"So!" she hissed, standing over the senseless girl, tapping the pale lips with one tiny satin-slipped foot. "So; you will cross my path and then laugh at poor Paquita because she likes not your soft smiles and sweet looks upon her lover! You will step on my heart—like my footsteps on your lips—you will laugh and coquet with him—with my Feluco, eh! No—not any more. My time it is now! I laugh at you—I bruise your baby lips—I spit upon you—ha! ha! I, Paquita—I do this!"

A beautiful, brilliant demon she appeared as she gave full vent to her wild jealousy, but the transport quickly ended. She heard the voice of the manager, Ben Coffee, calling aloud the name of Estelle. There was yet danger of discovery, and to guard against this was her first move.

She dragged the body of her victim into the further corner, rolled the heavy trunk close up against it, then piled clothes over all, drawing a long breath of relief as she drew back and assured herself that all was hidden from view, unless a close search was instituted. Then, knowing that the drug administered was powerful enough to insure her victim's silence for hours, Paquita left the room, locking the door, and hastened along the passage leading to the stage.

She reached this in time to hear the dying words of the young gymnast. Affecting as was the scene, it failed to touch her heart. She only regretted that Estelle was for the time being insensible to the magnitude of her loss.

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Will Have It!—A lady subscriber in Lake City, Florida, writes: "Rest assured that I will never cease to be a subscriber to the SATURDAY JOURNAL as long as I can get a dollar. Would sooner go without a new dress than to miss getting the dear old JOURNAL. A cousin of mine and myself had quite a controversy over the paper and its merits as compared with the other weeklies, and both mother and sister joined in with me in standing up for the JOURNAL. With three such advocates cousin had of course to give up, and now having tried the JOURNAL is of our own minds." The JOURNAL is always pleased to have its merits contrasted with that of the other weeklies, week by week, and we wish our friends, like the above correspondent, would make the relative merits of the popular weeklies a subject of discussion.

Sunshine Papers.

Foreign and American.

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,

This is my native land;

Whose heart hath no throb, who burneth,

From wandering on a foreign strand?

So asked Scott; and it was all very well for him to do so, seeing that he was an Englishman. One of the elementary forces of the British nature is its unbounded adoration of its own country and nationality. A true representative of Johnny Bull thinks the highest blessing ever bestowed upon a mortal is the being born in England; and the Frenchman believes there is no land like his sunny France; the Italian worships his Italy; Russians love their forests, and wastes, and broad dominion; the Japanese are jealous only to their island kingdom; and no doubt the Esquimaux prefers his eternal snows to any home in the most seductive climate. But where, oh! where, shall we find the American who has the same idolatrous love for his country? Who thinks it is a glorious birthright to have been born in the United States? Who asserts, with the pride of a Webster, "I was born an American; I live an American; I shall die an American?" Whose loyalty finds expression in the old toast of Decatur, "Our country; our country, right or wrong!" Whose heart within him burns as home his footsteps he hath turned from wandering on a foreign strand?

The truth is, admiration of our own country is not just the style with us Americans. We do not like to be reminded that we were a short time ago petty colonies; and that our grand-dames drank herb tea and spun their own linen; and that our grandfathers wore garments made of homemade cloth; and that a Charles Dickens came here and made fun of us, and said of our villages that they looked as if they had all sprung up in the night, reminding one of mushrooms; and that by some other of our self-complacent friends across the seas we are believed to be very crude, and young, and ignorant, and uncultured. We are apt to forget that we have made more rapid progress in the century of our existence as a separate and distinct nationality than other peoples have in double the time. We forget that our skilled labor, and mechanisms, and manufactures in most branches, can already compete, successfully with those of any known nation, in races where "the whole world come to run for the crown;" that our conveyances and systems of traveling are the most elegant, commodious, and complete known; that our people, en masse, are more thrifty, intelligent and bet-

ter educated than any other; that wealth and culture, among us, is a rule rather than an exception confined to an exclusive few, who inherit such by accident of birth; that our women are universally admitted to exceed those of any land in their combined attractions of being beautiful, graceful, artistically dressed, self-possessed, and well read; that we have come victorious out of every conflict in which we have engaged; that we hold the power to place ourselves first in the naval and commercial world; that we combine within our wonderful extent of territory every known climate and mineral resource; that we can row and shoot with the athletes of the world; and that, greatest and best of all, we are free, free, free!

Not only may it be said of every American his "soul is his own," but he owes no duty to a king—though I'm not sure that some of us would not admire to do so, judging by the enthusiastic adulation we bestow on every mustached and titled stranger who comes to see if Americans "are all white," and whether they know how to eat, and sleep, and talk, like other civilized tribes. To be sure, just now, we are making quite a time over our Centennial celebrations; though even concerning that there may be found Americans who will tell you contemptuously, "Oh, I am not particular about visiting the Centennial Exhibition; I've attended the Vienna Exposition, and of course this cannot compare with it!" But, notwithstanding this little furor of national pride and aggrandizement, we still retain a sublime passion for aping foreign fashions and manners. To do just as is done abroad is a manner with a large class of Americans.

Our dresses must be cut by French patterns; our hats must be labeled "imported," and our new fabrics must have unpronounceable foreign names. We no longer employ a "dressmaker," but we patronize Mademoiselle Fussy, and Madame Fitty, importers of Parisian modes. We wear English walking hats, French turbans, or the Princess, Marquise, Warwick, Bayonne, Arlington, or West End. If our gentlemen twirl a cane, they must feel positive that its mate, at that identical moment, is being twirled in Paris; they call on their tailors for English suits, French smoking jackets, Russian cloaks; they wear Lord Byron, Czar, Piccadilly collars and cuffs; they smoke Spanish cigars, part their hair in Paris style, their whiskers in English style, and affect a German diet; they put a glass in one eye and declare, with copied British drawl, "By Jove! awful nice girl that!" or, "Jove! it's such a deuced bore, don't you know?"

American girls make "nice" and "nasty," and "jolly," their pet adjectives because it is "Englishy" and raw over Palais Royal jewelry, or a new arrangement of the hair, because it is "Frenchy." And, in fact, the highest ambition of the average modern American young person, is some time, to visit his particular heaven—Paris!

For his valuable services in furnishing weekly poetry to the village paper, the readers of that sheet presented him an elegantly bound spelling-book, and he could not find words enough in the whole book to express his thankfulness. He used to pore over that book until he got poor himself, and treasured it all his life. But it never struck in much.

For an agricultural essay he was presented with a very fine beet. Perhaps owing to the delay it had died, but the fact of its being a dead beat did not lessen its character as a testimonial, and he kept it dried. He cherished it as his *bête noir*, if you know what that is. He always took an unbound and unsewed interest in other people's business, not because he ever made any money out of it, for he rather lost by it when he would come to foot up the profit and loss, but because he rather felt that he could manage theirs better than his own, and the Other People got together one day, and in a praiseworthy speech presented him with a well-deserved medal, as being the most meddlesome man in the town. He generally laid it away among the other archives of his eventful career.

He wrote a history of the United States which was considered very remarkable. It was totally unlike any other history, because he maintained there was nothing like originality in any literary production, and was presented by the Historical Society, of which he would have been a member if it had not been from a mistake made in the color of the ballots, with (not having any other testimonial on hand just then) an aged goose, which he afterward kept in his own room, stuffed, and showed with pride.

For his able efforts in trying to get out of paying honest debts, and the invention of new and plausible excuses, at a convention of down-trodden but sensitive debtors, he was presented with a very large purse as an appreciation of his services. In a trembling hand I find this record in his diary, "but there was nothing in the purse."

For his earnest endeavors in trying to organize a society for the prevention of cruelty to old clothes, for which he showed till the day of his death an unaltering devotion, he was presented by his friends with an elegant and valuable box of scented toilet soap, and so highly did he value the gift, he preserved every case of it religiously, and never upon any occasion would he use any of it. It was one of his midst of so many who are destitute.

Country people are hospitable and generous, else the tramps would not leave the city to wander in the country. Their ears are ever open to the cry of distress and their hands are never closed to alivitiae it. This kindness, generosity and charity are often imposed upon, but they seem to prefer to aid all who call for them to be some deserving creatures in the midst of so many who are destitute.

If you are in trouble how many and many will aid you! Among country people there seems to be one bond of fraternal friendship. If Farmer John's barn is burned the neighbors will all turn out at the "raising" of a new one. If Farmer Tom is kept from work by sickness, his neighbors will cut down his trees for him, saw and split the wood for him, and they'll not send him in a heavy bill for their services. Do as you would be done by seems to be their motto, and well and nobly they act up to it.

Country people are thoughtful of others' comfort; for you will find by the pump or by the "old oaken bucket" a tin or dipper that the tired traveler or weary wayfarer may refresh himself. And the dipper is not chained to the well or pump lest any one should steal it. Country folks can form no conception of a person who would be so base as to take the dipper after having a refreshing draught; it would be as bad as for a person to rob the pocket of a man who had saved him from drowning.

The quiet ways of country people have a charm about them that pleases you. They seem to glide along smoothly and grow old gradually, so gradually as to be almost imperceptible. The early hours they keep invigilating them and prolongs their lives. Most of their wealth lies in the product of their land and they take an honest pride in cultivating it.

Living so much among the works of Nature as they do, they are more apt to look up to Nature's God and thank Him for His benefits. It doesn't seem to me that a lover of Nature can be an atheist. Where God's handiwork is all round him he must acknowledge that this handiwork is not the work of chance.

There is not so much difference of *caste* in the country, not so much prating about the pride of noble birth. Thus the country people are sociable and neighborly. They live among themselves, and, when business causes them to go away, they still remember the dear

old home and its associations, and long for the time when they shall return.

God bless the country and God bless those that dwell in it! May the country people remain as unostentatious as they now are, and they will be happy. The massive monument does not seem to spurn the slate headstone in the graveyard. As equal in life so they are equal in death and equal in the great "land of the hereafter."

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolscap Papers.

A Man of Great Presents.

One of my uncles, Mr. Caleb G. Whitehorn, Esquire, as he used to serenely write his name on due bills, was a very peculiar man in his way; in fact was one of our most distant relatives—so distant, indeed, that he was away beyond speaking to any others of the family, and, like every one else of the family, he felt himself away above the rest, thereby to preserve the integrity of the race. By pitchin into every great movement of the day, and putting his head to it and frequently putting his foot into it, he got to be quite a prominent character, in his way.

He was the recipient of very numerous testimonials from great men, and others which of course, although he prided in them, did not exalt him any more in his own mind, from the fact that he was already exalted so high in his own estimation that it was impossible to go any higher. Nevertheless he was a harmless individual, and perfectly willing to pay his way in the world as he went along, provided he didn't want to use his money for any other purpose.

Among the many presents which he received I find in looking over his diary the first was a switch by his affectionate father, who generally presented it with a neat speech, and as Caleb received it he was generally loud in applause. The old man only presented him with one end of the switch, however, and it used to tangle his legs up a good deal to carry that end.

When a young man, he was presented by the literary society of his place, of which he was a member, with a gourd. Oh, it was a beautiful gourd, one of the very finest in the country, and had received the premium at the fair. It was such a nice present and it tickled him so much that it was difficult to restrain him from having it made right up into pumpkin pie on the spot. It beat all the gourds that ever were gored. It was such a beautiful, beautiful thing. He returned many thanks—but kept the gourd.

For his valuable services in furnishing weekly poetry to the village paper, the readers of that sheet presented him an elegantly bound spelling-book, and he could not find words enough in the whole book to express his thankfulness. He used to pore over that book until he got poor himself, and treasured it all his life.

For an agricultural essay he was presented with a very fine beet. Perhaps owing to the delay it had died, but the fact of its being a dead beat did not lessen its character as a testimonial, and he kept it dried. He cherished it as his *bête noir*, if you know what that is.

He always took an unbound and unsewed interest in other people's business, not because he ever made any money out of it, for he rather lost by it when he would come to foot up the profit and loss, but because he rather felt that he could manage theirs better than his own, and the Other People got together one day, and in a praiseworthy speech presented him with a well-deserved medal, as being the most meddlesome man in the town. He generally laid it away among the other archives of his eventful career.

He wrote a history of the United States which was considered very remarkable. It was totally unlike any other history, because he maintained there was nothing like originality in any literary production, and was presented by the Historical Society, of which he would have been a member if it had not been from a mistake made in the color of the ballots, with (not having any other testimonial on hand just then) an aged goose, which he afterward kept in his own room, stuffed, and showed with pride.

For his able efforts in trying to get out of paying honest debts, and the invention of new and plausible excuses, at a convention of down-trodden but sensitive debtors, he was presented with a very large purse as an appreciation of his services. In a trembling hand I find this record in his diary, "but there was nothing in the purse."

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Topics of the Time.

That the late Centennial Exposition was a great pecuniary success is not the least gratifying fact of this wonderful World's Fair. The summary of receipts show that over \$8,000,000 of paying visitors attended the exhibition, the cash received from this source amounting to about \$3,750,000. To these receipts must be added the income from concessions or privileges granted exhibitors and others, which amount to more than \$1,000,000, thus giving a total of nearly \$5,000,000 of income. The outgo for running expenses has been about \$1,800,000, which would leave a surplus of some \$3,000,000 to be apportioned among the stockholders.

—And another interesting fact was the gradual progress in popularity of the great show. It did not, like all ordinary shows, jump into success, but grew into it. Thus, in May, the daily average was 19,946; in June, 26,750; in July, 24,481; in August, 33,655; in September, 31,961; in October, 102,456. The longer the show lasted, the greater the wonder grew, and if it could have been kept open another month or two, with regard to both exhibitors and visitors, the figures for November and December would no doubt have borne even more convincing proof of the progressive popularity. Taking the entire 159 days together, the daily average attendance has been about 50,000, which is 40,000 less than was originally calculated upon as needful to pay expenses. The result is gratifying, as showing that the expenses have been much less than were estimated at the outset.

—An Ulster County, N. Y., demobilized, engaged in making a cloak entirely of partridge feathers. It will be at least 10,000 feathers of different sizes, the lower portion of the cloak being made of the tail feathers and then ranging up. The breast feathers come next, while the variegated plumage around the neck of the bird will encircle the white throat of the lady. It will require about one hundred partridges to fill out the regular course of feathers, which are placed in layers similar to the way in which they grow on the bird. The birds are shot by her brother, who picks them over whenever she wants them, only asking that she will nicely cook what is left for himself to line his epaulettes.

—Henry Islop McIvar, a native of Edinburgh, is a leader in the Servian army. He has fought on four continents in twenty years, and almost always on the side of the smallest numbers. He gained a medal in the Indian mutiny, fought under Garibaldi in 1859, under Lee in 1861, for the Mexican Republic, was a little Indian skirmisher in Texas. He was in the Cuban rebellion, served in Greece against the brigands, was in the patriot army in Cuba for a while, and then had a cavalry command in Egypt. He fought in France under Faliero against the Germans, turned up in Paris as a correspondent of a London paper, and is now a leader of Servian irregulars.

—If anything in this uncertain world will sober a drunkard it is an enforced bath in the Niagara river just above the Falls. A short time ago four intoxicated men were capsized in a small boat near Chippewa, and were swept into the upper Horseshoe rapids. Three of them clung to the hull of the boat, but the fourth broke loose from their grasp and was kept afloat with great difficulty. The captain of a tow-boat caught sight of them and headed for them with all the steam his

being so nervous; then Branthope himself stood at the door, waiting for her to come forth.

The look of love, of adoration, she gave him before he led her down the stairs, ought to have turned a worse man than this one from his purpose; but the selfishness of a frivolous, careless pleasure-seeker like young Maxwell is something more appalling than the set crimes of great villains. He thought not of the welfare of the girl who thus confided in him; he thought only of the results to himself of the deception he was about to practice.

"We are going to church, mother," said Miss Ella, pausing a moment at the parlor door; "we shall not be out late."

There by the curbside stood the close carriage in waiting. Branthope was never more gracefully easy and self-possessed than as he helped the ladies in, and chatted to them during the brief drive. He was almost too gay to satisfy Margaret, who felt the deep solemnity of the occasion overpowering even her joy.

The carriage stopped in front of a large church, which loomed up dimly in the star-light. Margaret never learned the name of the church, nor on what street it stood, but it appeared to be somewhere in the suburbs, as there were vacant lots about it, and the gas-lights were few and far between.

"They do not have evening service here, but the pastor promised to be on hand; and a friend of mine, a gentleman, is to assist me in getting through with this dreadfully embarrassing matter," said Branthope, speaking quickly, as if, after all, he was more excited than he cared to show. Taking the cold hand of the confiding girl on his arm, he drew her forward into the dimly-lighted building; the sexton was there, and the pastor, as he had promised, was waiting, with a gentleman in a cloak standing near. There was only one lamp lighted near the altar; the place was cold; a tremor ran through the bride's frame, but too many conflicting emotions were throbbing at her heart to enable her to view calmly her surroundings. She did not have time to conjecture as to who her lover's friend might be; indeed, she did not throw back her gaze until she stood before the altar, and the clergyman began the solemn words of the marriage service. She did, indeed, notice—for she recalled it vividly afterward, that the pastor said, she following him, "I take thee, John," etc., instead of the more familiar Branthope—but as John was her cousin's first name, she recognized the appropriateness of its use at the instant.

How soon it was all over! the ring upon her finger, the benediction pronounced, and she, turning, agitated and trembling, to meet Branthope's eyes and smile.

"It is as well," he remarked, "since this is a quiet affair, to have it properly attested. Let us all sign our names to the church record."

The sexton brought the book, and the bride subscribed her name where she was told, never noticing, in her bewilderment, who signed first or last, and not yet having had a glimpse of Branthope's friend's face; she heard the clergyman expressing his thanks for the handsome *douceur* he had received; a gold piece glittered in the sexton's hand for his trouble in opening the church; then Branthope again gave her his arm, to which she now clung heavily, almost overpowering by the consciousness of the important step she had so hastily taken, and again they stood on the cold pavement beneath the silver glint of winter stars. There were now two carriages before the church.

"Good-by, for the present," said Miss Ella, kissing the bride, laughingly; "we will ride home by ourselves. I wish you both every imaginable joy!" and almost before she could collect her thoughts to wonder why they need drive back by themselves, the bridegroom had lifted her into his carriage, sprung in after her, gave the word to the driver, and they were rapidly whirled along the noisy street.

Margaret was thankful that her husband did not too soon break the silence. The events of the last few hours had culminated so rapidly that now she desired a few moments of rest. Silently he sat by her side, as if to allow her this needed rest. They two were alone in the world together. The darkness of night shut them in, save when, every other moment, the light of a street lamp flashed in and was gone; the driver in his seat outside, attended only to the order which had been given him, to drive as fast as the law allowed, to the place which had been designated to him.

Presently the man by her side took her hand and kissed the wedding-ring upon it.

"Sweet Margaret!" She started, tore her hand wildly from him, and stared at him through the darkness, until passing the next lamp, its gleams rested for one brief instant full upon his face. Then the bride shrank into the corner of the carriage, holding up both hands, and would have screamed, had not her voice failed her, her throat, dry as if filled with ashes, refusing to give forth a sound.

"What is it, my dear wife?" questioned the same calm, soft voice, whose first accent had thrilled her with dread and amazement.

"Your wife! your wife!" she gasped, at last. "Where is Branthope?"

"Escorting your bridesmaid home, darling, without doubt."

"Mr. Martinique, let me out of this carriage."

"Mrs. Martinique, I have taken too much trouble to secure you, to let you go thus easily."

"I do not know what you mean. I don't care what you mean to say. I must get out. Driver, stop!" she cried, frantically.

But the loud wheels rattled over the stones, and the driver either did not hear or did not care to seem so.

"Sweet wife, it is too late to quarrel, now. What can't be cured must be endured. How much happier for you to be married to one who worships you, than to an indifferent scapegrace like your cousin. He never cared for you, while I—"

"I am not married to you! don't say it! We are married—Branthope and I—oh, where is he, that he does not come?"

"Here is the marriage certificate—can you read it by this uncertain light? Take it, and keep it carefully. Such documents are sometimes important."

She snatched it from his hand, and strained her eyes to read it in the varying light. Yes! there was the blasting fact—their names linked together in an eternal bond—Margaret Branthope Maxwell, and John Lopez Martinique.

"I cannot understand it!" she cried, in despair.

"It is very simple," he said, calmly as ever. "I took your cousin's place when we approached the altar, as we had previously arranged. The clergyman was not in our confidence. He was told that you expected to marry me, but that your friends objected to accounts of my being a foreigner. Being assured of my respectability, ability to support a wife, that I was at liberty to marry, etc., and seeing no

reason why we, who desired it, should not be united, he made no great opposition to the privacy of the ceremony. Miss Ella was not in the plot, either; so that you cannot blame her. Your cousin did all the talking, I presume, when he announced the programme to her. He was to represent that you had come to New York on purpose to marry me, your uncle not being willing that you should wed a resident of another country, but that you were to affect an interest in him, the more perfectly to conceal your true purpose. Miss Ella doubtless thought that you acted admirably. We depended for the success of our plot, simply upon your excitement and embarrassment preventing your noticing, in the dim light, who stood beside you at the important moment."

"But why plot against me?" asked poor Margaret.

"Ay! there's the rub! I wanted you, sweet wife; wasn't that reason enough? and Maxwell wanted money! What more natural? I gave him a swinging *bouys*, over and above what he would have received had he married you. Firstly, I canceled all his obligations to me, which were not small; then I gave him funds on which to keep up appearances this winter, and lastly, I abandoned all your claims to the Maxwell estates, as I intend to take you far from this country, and to provide for you so generously that you will not require any of your uncle's property. It is your noble cousin's plan to visit Branthope Villa, and there represent to your doting relative that you voluntarily abandoned him to follow my fortunes round the world. Of course he will again reverse the will, young Maxwell will have the property and the reputation of being his uncle's favorite, and can, doubtless, sooner or later, win the pretty young lady with whom he is at present infatuated."

Margaret moaned—gasping, dry sound, which ought to have awakened pity in a clod. Perhaps it did move the heart of this curious man, who, professing to love her as he did, was willing to peril her happiness to secure himself a doubtful bliss; he attempted again to take her hand, saying, soothingly:

"Why regret that unworthy cousin? He had neither the taste nor the heart to appreciate you, while I have thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing, lived for nothing but you since I first felt the faintest assurance that I should some time win you. I will be a good husband to you—will not demand nor expect too much from you, until you have time to adjust your feelings to your circumstances. For you to rebel against fate is vain. Submission and a degree of contentment will best secure your happiness."

"Where are we going?" she asked, as he paused.

"To the dock, where we will take a boat and be rowed to the ship's side, which to-morrow morning sets sail for South America."

Margaret leaped her head against the cushioned seat; her brain whirled for a few seconds; she thought herself about to faint, and only saved herself by the strength of a resolve will.

A bride! oh, miserable reality! A short time she had stepped into that carriage, happy, blessed, her heart throbbing with the purest, warmest love for one whom she had chosen in her earliest girlhood—her first love—he to whom she had been so true and tender, even while having his faults of character cruelly revealed to her—her face rosy, her eyes lustrous with the tender glow of the mar-

time predilection.

Now she sat beside her husband, hand and heart turned into ice. This man, a stranger, with whom she had never conversed but twice—whose habits, business, nationality were unknown to her—a stranger, in every sense of the word, since there are those to whom we feel drawn at once as by ties of sympathy or kinship, while this person had ever been to the eyes lustrious with the tender glow of the mar-

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THE SATURDAY JOURNAL

7

When Conductor Wilkinson left his pretty passenger at Mineola, that afternoon, they were mutually sorry to part. But a surprise was in store for Esther, when the 5.55 train stopped beside the platform. A tall form in blue uniform piloted her to the car and Conductor Wilkinson arranged a seat for her, saying:

"I've got a little business down at Port Jefferson"—without feeling a twinge of conscience for the falsehood—"so I'm going down on this train, to-night, while Billy Dennis runs mine for me."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Esther, with bright eyes, but blushing a trifle at her admission.

It was half-past seven of the rosy night when Mark Wilkinson helped Esther down at St. James' station, and gave her hand a hearty squeeze at parting, and whispered an assurance that he hoped she'd "find the folks real pleasant," and that he meant to come and see how she liked it there, before long. For a few minutes the little beauty in the black robes felt desolate enough; but then a kind-faced old man drove up to the platform, and she was joyfully welcomed by uncle Elisha. Her trunk, which by some carelessness had not arrived until the same train, was put in the wagon, and off they went in the sweet twilight; Esther soon feeling at home with her uncle, though she had some dread of meeting her aunt, who, the farmer kindly told her, she mustn't mind. "She's real good sort, ef you rub her the right way."

Mrs. Randall's reception of her orphan niece was not entirely ungracious; but when Esther went early to her room, feeling sorely homesick, she pursed up her lips and waited for her better-half to open the conversation in which she intended to express her views of the young lady.

"She's a right nice little 'un, isn't she, Betsey?" said uncle Elisha, coaxingly. "A deal like her mother, only more perk lookin'."

"Perf? Yes, I guess so. But she'll find she isn't goin' to keep up any of her city fashions here, I kin soon tell her. It'll cost enough to give her calico gowns."

"Well, well!" The farmer had accidentally pulled from his pocket a letter. "Ef I didn't forget all about this letter she gave me," and he proceeded to read it, while Mrs. Randall cleared the late tea-table.

"Betsey! Betsey!" he called, excitedly, in a few minutes; and as his wife appeared, he looked at her curiously, as he added, "What do you think? Esther's worth ten thousand dollars! This is a letter from her guardian. And she's only come to stay till we git tired of her, because her mother's wish was to have her see the old homestead, and learn to know her uncle Elisha!"

"Umph!" said aunt Betsey, rather crestfallen; but in no other way than a difference of manner toward Esther did she ever acknowledge her defeated position.

And when Mark Wilkinson, late in the fall—having paid several flying visits to the Randall Farm, and gained Esther's consent to overlook the fact that he had once loved and lost, and take him for her husband—relieved aunt Betsey entirely of her trouble, that lady, as well as kind uncle Elisha, was really sorry to have the sweet maiden go. As for Esther, she assured them, again and again, that she was so glad she even came to St. James; adding—to

"You know why."

TWO KISSES.

BY MARC O. ROLFE.

The moon was shining softly, the fields were decked in green.
The wind through the trembling branches sung a low, sweet and low.
And with dear Ivy Landon, my heart's own royal queen,
I wandered out beside the brooklet, with its calm, unripling flow.
Across the stretch of meadow, to the elm-tree gray
and drooping, I plucked a violet from the grassy, verdant glow,
And, with a kiss upon her forehead, I twined it in her hair.

The sun was shining coldly, the fields were wrapped in white.
The wind through the shivering branches moaned a requiescent and drear;
And I was sad and lonely, sadly, when I went with her that night.
To a lone grave 'neath the elm-tree, grim sentinel gray and sear—
And I wept to know that Ivy, my bride, was sleeping there.
But it was while I mourned her deeply, that God, who held her dear,
Had kissed her on her forehead, and twined his jewels in her hair.

Rifle and Tomahawk: OR, NED WYLDE, THE BOY SCOUT.

A Romance of the Sioux War.

BY "TEXAS JACK."

(S. B. OMONDRO.)

CHAPTER XVI.

MONTANA MIKE ASTONISHED.

ONE, two, three! and the three pursuers of Montana Mike bit the dust, brought down by the unerring fire of Ned Wynde.

"Now, sir, I think we had better leave here—I have a hiding-place above that a snake can not find," and the boy turned coolly to his companion, who with a great effort, got to his feet.

Leading the way up the steep ascent, the boy soon stopped by a large tree that grew to a great height and overhanging a rocky cliff above.

"Now, this is not a very hard tree to climb, and it leads to a safe place. I would have been there now, only I didn't wish to leave my own good pony; but I come here in case I should get into trouble, for I was in these hills hunting, a year ago, as guide to a party of gentlemen from the city, and I found out this retreat them."

"You are a brave boy. You have saved my life," at last Mike found breath enough to say.

"We won't talk of that, now. Are you able to climb this tree?"

"Yes; but have we left no trail?"

"None since we left the prairie. A bound couldn't track us here."

Into the branches the two then clambered from the rocks, and at a height of thirty feet from the foot of the giant monarch of the forest.

Slowly up the trunk they went, from limb to limb, until they came to where a huge branch overhung the rocky summit of a jutting spur of the mountain.

Out upon this they went, and let themselves down upon a kind of shelf, overhanging by a sheer precipice behind them, protected by boulders upon each side, and open toward the prairie.

The only means of access was by way of the

tree, and a safer, better place could not have been found.

"I followed a bear up here last year; and I got him, too; see, here is water, and these rocks form a kind of a cave," and Ned pointed to a trickling rivulet that fell over the precipice, and then threw his roll of blankets under the sheltering cliff.

"There, lie down and rest yourself, and you will soon be all right."

Montana Mike obeyed; the boy was the master of the man then.

Explanations then followed between the two. Montana Mike's story was soon told; all that he cared to have the man know, the boy then made known. He had come into these parts in search of one whom he was determined to find.

That very night he had found him, and—had lost him.

But he would not despair; his life would be devoted to the duty, for duty it was to more than one.

Then the two went peacefully to sleep, and the sun was far across the heavens when they awoke.

Well prepared with provisions, and with plenty of good water near, the two fared most comfortably, little troubled by the bands of prowling Indians they saw going hither and thither, or their wild war-cries when they discovered their three dead comrades, slain by Ned Wynde.

Thus another night and day passed, the Indians searching the gorges and hills for them, but without success, and both Montana Mike and Ned Wynde were perfectly satisfied that their retreat could not be discovered.

"To-morrow I will be able to travel—I will be myself again, thanks to you," said Mike, as the two sat together in the moonlight, the third night of their stay on the rocky shelf.

"Well, we can then slip away from here and go and join Crook, who is marching toward the Rosebud. When he strikes these villages the war will end, and then I can continue my hunt without danger of being constantly hunted."

"You must be pretty determined to find your man, to risk your life up here."

Mike glanced in the direction indicated, and after a while answered: "Your eyes are better than mine, if you see anything."

"I see it now distinctly; it is either a horse or a buffalo coming this way; it is too large for a deer."

"Yes, I see it, now; it is a horse, and he has no rider. Now will be our chance, if he comes this way."

The boy continued to watch the approaching object with the greatest interest.

Nearer and nearer it came, until the moonlight plainly discovered it to be a horse walking slowly toward the hills.

"There is no man upon him. I'll go down and catch him, if I can—hal! see over his back! a man walking behind him; I saw him raise his head."

"You are right boy; he is approaching these hills cautiously, and for fear of a shot, is keeping behind his steed."

With increased interest the two men gazed upon the approaching animal, which soon was almost at the base of the hills.

Here the horse halted, and above his back was visible a head, surmounted by a broad sombrero.

"It is a white man, that's certain," said Mike, and as he spoke, apparently satisfied with his observation, the man came round to the side of the steed and sprung into the saddle.

"Hulloa! what! why, what the deuce ails the boy?" exclaimed Montana Mike, as Ned Wynde suddenly sprang to his feet, threw his rifle-strap over his back, and the next moment was rapidly descending the tree.

To the call of Mike the boy made no answer—perhaps he did not hear.

Then he disappeared, and a few moments of suspense followed, when a dark form dashed out into the moonlight from the base of the hill.

Still, like a statue, sat the horseman in his saddle, his eyes turned searchingly upon the tree-bordered hill.

Suddenly his gaze caught the form bounding from the shadow, and like thought he wheeled to dash away.

"Hart Moline! Hart Moline! for God's sake, hold!" came the ringing tones of the boy; but, unheeding, the man sped on; the rifle leaped to the shoulder of Ned Wynde, and a sharp report followed.

High in air bounded the splendid steed ridden by the man, but he did not go down, and if hit hard, still had struggled to continue his flight.

As if determined to kill, the boy sent shot after shot in pursuit of the flying horseman, who, apparently unharmed, still pressed on.

Then, in seeming despair, the brave boy broke down, and leaning his head upon his horse, he burst into a flood of tears, his bitter sobs heard distinctly by Montana Mike upon the cliff.

A clatter of hoofs suddenly aroused the boy. They were near at hand: and once more himself, he wheeled quickly to meet an expected foe.

But no; the moonlight shone upon a superb black steed and a splendid looking rider.

It was Fearless Frank, the scout, who had suddenly appeared upon the scene, coming from around the base of the hill, and sweeping on like the wind.

Seemingly unmindful of the presence of the boy, he spurred on hot on the trail of Hart Moline, and as fast as he could run, Ned Wynde rushed on in chase, and five minutes after the three were lost to the gaze of Montana Mike, who, with surprise, had watched the strange scene occurring upon the prairie.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRAILING A REBELLAGE.

WHEN Fearless Frank left the camp of General Crook, he felt that he had a dangerous duty before him, for he was determined to again hold converse with the Rose of the Rosebud, and none knew the danger attending such a determination better than himself.

Having been turned aside from his former scout to the prairie encampment of Sitting Bull, by the discovery of the buried woman in the thicket, he shaped his course again in that direction, and approached it with the greatest caution, in the early evening ere the moon had arisen.

Halting for a rest for his steed, after crossing the river, he sought a place of concealment for Whirlwind, and then cautiously crept in the direction of the Indian village.

At length he left the shelter of the river bank, and was creeping through an open piece of timber, when the noise of hoofs caused him to quickly draw himself up into the branches of a tree near at hand.

A moment after a score of warriors came along, and halted beneath the shadow of the very tree that concealed the scout.

Why they had stopped there, the scout could not tell, and for a moment believed that their quick eyes had fallen upon his trail.

No; they were not looking but listening.

Then the ears of the scout caught the clatter of hoofs; a horse was approaching over the prairie, and coming at a rapid gallop.

This sound was what had caused the Indians to halt.

Each warrior then, at a motion of one who seemed to be the chief, took shelter behind the trunks of some convenient trees, and he who had seemed the leader remained beneath the large willow that concealed the scout.

Brightly through an opening in the branches the moonlight fell upon the warrior, and every nerve in the frame of the scout trembled as he beheld, almost in reach of his hand, the dark, stern, daring face and athletic form of Sitting Bull, who little dreamed that a deadly enemy was near, contemplating the chances of escape should he kill him where he sat upon his pretentious yawned a huge cavern.

"I guess this will keep—I'll go back and get Montana Mike, and together we'll solve this mystery."

"Anyhow, I have found out one thing; this is the secret retreat of Hart Moline, and I believe he is in league with the red-skins."

So saying, the boy retraced his way, and gliding down the gorge, he suddenly stopped, with an expression of delight upon his face.

"Who can this belong to?" Hart Moline's

"I live," and he turned the rifle he had found over and over again, examining it closely.

"Yes, here is his name; I remember the rifle well; but how did he come to drop it?

"Well, I'll solve all this when I get back. In the mean time it will serve Mike a good turn."

Retracing his steps as he had come, in half an hour he was in front of the hillside, and a low whistle received an answer from above on the rocks.

"Come down and bring the traps with you, and in ten minutes more Montana Mike stood by his side.

"First, here is a gun I will lend you. It is loaded, and will shoot sixteen times."

"And the owner—you killed him?"

"No, he escaped me; but I made a discovery, and returned for you."

"I am ready; what did you discover?"

"A cave, where, if I am not mistaken, I will find the one I have long sought—ha! you're a red heart glad, and redder your hands with the crimson blood of the pale-faces."

"Sitting Bull! It is you I seek in these parts, and I will find you."

"It is you I seek in these parts, and I will find you."

"I am a friend to my people, and I will help them."

"I am a friend to my people, and I will help them."

"I am a friend to my people, and I will help them."

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"I am a friend to my people, and I will help them."

"I am a friend to my people, and

DECMBR.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Fatal month that lovest to see
Beautiful things perish,
That's rt the last month in the year
That I'd ever cherish!

We must sit around our hearths
After daily labors
Piling coals upon the fire—
And o'heads of neighbors,

The sun to warmer climes retires,
And the skies grow colder;
And December to the earth
Thou givest the cold shoulder.

Light of other days is gone
That once shone so gladly;

And in going up the street
Down we go quite sadly.

Cold the Boreal wind sweeps down
From the Arctic ocean it steals—
And it blows the frost away—
While it blows our noses.

Dark and dim the window-pane,
For the frost-flowers prink it,
And the nights are cold and blank,
And we want more blanket.

There's the hungry at the door
Knocking for a pittance,
Or you'll give him a sack,
And old socks for mittens.

Dying year stands shivering
O'er nature's wanning fire;

And the flame is very low—
Overcasts are higher.

Round the house the chill wind blows,
Vesper hour and matin,
Aye through the night it steals—
I never stuff a hat in,

Feathery flakes how light they fall!
Quick and ever quicker,

Covering the walks and ways—
Where's a little nigger?

Disappointment only comes
To the spirit's hunger;

Last year's overcoat were short—
This year's free-coats longer.

Dead are all the tender hopes
Flower-time created;

Dark seems all the future sky—
Summer clothes have faded.

Oh, December, dark and drear,
They reign little pleasures!

Icicles hang from the eaves—
Alice bringing up the rear with a curious smile around her mouth, and a sparkle in her brown eyes.

"Where?" exclaimed Bob, his big eyes opening to their fullest extent.

"Back here, 'bout twenty miles north.

Thar's two sloughs thar—one called Purgatory

and t'other Hell Slough, and I tell you they're

swampers, boys. Thar's been more solid swar-

in' done up than any place this side of the

sulphur pit! Why, you can actly smell

stone round there; the place's so nigh related to

the bottomless pit itself."

"What gave them those scorching old names?" asked George.

"A party of emigrants came down that way

a few years ago, and arter paddlin' through

one slough, they went on and stuck in t'other."

They was tellin' it arterward, and says one,

"arter pluggin' and wallerin' through Purga-

tory, we went on and mired down in Hell,"

and ever since that time them sloughs have

been known by them names."

"Well," said George, with affected serious-

ness, "after finding out what you have been

guilty of, Jim, I am inclined to think you are

getting pretty close to where you're wanted."

"I'm not alone, thank fortune, exclaimed

Kemply."

"Boys, how long do you propose to tarry

here?" asked Uncle Lige.

"We would like to leave immediately, if

we could obtain your services as guide to Swan

Lake," I answered.

"I'm your persimmons, boys—just as lief

spend a week or two with you youngsters as not.

Thar's a lot of friendly Musquakie Ing-

ins camped up thar, and so thar'll be a chance

for some royal fun. I'll hitch up Buck and

Bright and haul my canoe up to the lake, so's

you can rove the water over and over, to your

heart's content."

"All right," we responded, with eager de-

light, "let us be up and off by sunrise."

"That's it, boys, if ye want to make a good

day of it; so I'll he me to the house, snatch off

a bit of sleep, and be ready for the trip," and

Uncle Lige rose and took his departure.

We at once retired to rest, and were soon

fast asleep, our minds filled with bright vis-

ions, the offerings of our most ardent anticipa-

tions of the morrow.

The night passed quietly away and with the

first streaks of dawn we were up and ready to

depart for Swan Lake. Uncle Lige soon came

rattling down with his prancing oxen to a low-

wheeled wagon, upon which he placed the ca-

noe and outfit. Then, with gad in hand, he

mounted into the canoe, swung his whip

through the air with a hissing crack, and rolled

away toward the north. We followed, closed

behind, in our own conveyance.

Our course lay over an undulating prairie,

whose limits were the blue horizon. We

plunged through Indian creek, at the risk of

drowning our animals, and crossing the low

bottom beyond, we began the gradual ascent of

a long inclination, terminating in an im-

mense tract of rolling table lands.

As we toiled slowly up the hill, through the

deep, bown grass, our guide stopped his team,

and pointing to a large mound covered with

reeds he said:

"Boys, cut yander, where ye see 'em weeds,

are one of the natural curiosities of this prarie.

It's a gushin' mineral spring with tramp-

in' across to see. You can't drive to it, for

the ground is soft and spongy around it. It'll

be as much as you can do to 'preach it on foot.

If ye go, look out for deer; they kind o' han-

kers round that."

We left our team in Uncle Lige's care and

started to the spring. Before we reached it,

we found deer tracks on the prairie, pointing

toward the mound, whither the animals had

been attracted by the saline elements of the

water. As we ascended the mound we found

Uncle Lige's words were true. The earth was

soft and spongy and covered over with a thin

surf, that trembled and quivered under our

weight, threatening to break through and in-

gulf us at every step. Here and there were dark,

dim holes, and gaping cracks in the

earth, resembling the pits and fissures around

volcanic crater. We found the spring on

the summit of the mound. The water was

gushing out slowly, and passing off along a

little channel it had worn through the crust, or

surface. We drank of it through a hollow reed

that served as a kind of filter. It was cold

and clear, but strongly impregnated with min-

erals.

Having fully explored the mound, we re-

turned to the wagons and resumed our jour-

ney up the slope. We finally reached the

most prominent point on the eminence above,

from which a grand and imposing scene was

unfolded to our enraptured gaze.

"Draw your loads, why don't you?" asked

Jim.

"I would have done so, had I possessed a

awl-screw when in the field; now I shall pro-

ceed to investigate the cause of my bad luck to-

day."

Attaching a screw to his ramrod, he inserted

it into his gun. To his surprise the rod did not

descend over half the length of the barrel ere

it struck some obstruction.

"By St. Peter, the charge is blown half out,

anyhow," George remarked, twisting the screw

into the top wad and drawing it out. Then he

turned the gun up, expecting the shot to run

out, but he was disappointed.

"I surely didn't put two wads of the shot,"

he said, inserting the rod again, and drawing

out a second wad sure enough. But still the

shot refused to quit the barrel. A third wad—a

fourth, fifth, and so on up to fifty, were with-

drawn ere he had cleared one barrel, and found

that there was not a grain of powder nor a shot

in either barrel.

The night passed away, and by sunrise the

next morning we were off for the deer-range.

After a day's hunting we returned to camp.

He had had the chance of several shots that day at deer, but he had been unable to get his gun off.

He had primed it a score of times; the caps

would burst, but no discharge would follow.

He knew he had loaded his gun the evening be-

fore in life.

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"I would have done so, had I possessed a

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ceed to investigate the cause of my bad luck to-

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"I was thinking of Jim's face, the whole truth

of which I have heard from his mother," said

Uncle Lige.

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